



# News for Stakeholders

April 2011

## Contact Information

Hallie Zimmers  
Stakeholder Liaison, APHIS  
Legislative and Public Affairs  
202-720-0378 (ph)  
202-720-3982 (fax)  
[hallie.zimmers@aphis.usda.gov](mailto:hallie.zimmers@aphis.usda.gov)

Jacob Hegemann  
State Liaison, APHIS  
Legislative and Public Affairs  
202-720-6794 (ph)  
202-720-3982 (fax)  
[jacob.hegeman@aphis.usda.gov](mailto:jacob.hegeman@aphis.usda.gov)

## Administrator's Message



Cindy Smith

## QUICK LINKS

- Incoming FOIA Requests and First Quarter 2011 FOIA Responses Available on APHIS Web Site
- National Animal Health Emergency Response Corps Membership Exceeds 1400 Nationwide
- USDA Seeks Nominations for Biotechnology and 21st Century Agriculture Advisory Committee
- APHIS Biotechnology Regulatory Services Earns ISO 9001:2008 Recertification
- Going Global: APHIS' Role in Facilitating Agricultural Trade
- APHIS YouTube Feature of the Month: Don't Risk Citrus, Don't Move Citrus
- APHIS Employee Feature: Patricia Douglass, Plant Protection and Quarantine
- Vacancies in APHIS

## Incoming FOIA Requests and First Quarter 2011 FOIA Responses Available on APHIS Web Site

In keeping with APHIS' commitment to transparency, the Agency's first quarter 2011 Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) responses are now available on the APHIS Web site. This month APHIS also started posting a log of incoming FOIA requests on the Agency Web site.

On average, APHIS' receives approximately 1,200 FOIA requests a year from members of the general public, journalists, non-profit organizations, stakeholder groups and others who are seeking information about Agency program activities not otherwise publically available. The FOIA Web site will now contain a log for each request that includes a unique tracking number, the subject of the request and the name of the requestor.



# News for Stakeholders

April 2011

The log will be updated monthly, and is available at  
[http://www.aphis.usda.gov/foia/foia\\_reading\\_room.shtml](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/foia/foia_reading_room.shtml)

All information requests are reviewed by APHIS' FOIA specialists who then develop a response and withhold certain information in keeping with Federal regulations. Depending on the nature of the request, a response could be as short as a page or encompass hundreds of pages of documentation. The Agency began posting redacted FOIA responses last August so that State partners, stakeholders and the general public could easily access information formally requested through the FOIA process.

In addition to the first quarter 2011 responses, the Agency's 2010 FOIA responses are also available in the same location. These responses can be accessed by going to  
[http://www.aphis.usda.gov/foia/foia\\_requests.shtml](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/foia/foia_requests.shtml)

APHIS' FOIA office will continue to post completed responses quarterly. The posted information consists of the original FOIA request, the FOIA response letter, and redacted records. While the vast majority of Agency responses will be available through the FOIA Reading Room, some responses, such as those that pertain to open investigations and personnel matters, will not be posted.

APHIS' decision to post redacted FOIA responses online is one of several efforts the Agency's FOIA office has recently undertaken to increase transparency and make it easier for the public and Agency stakeholders to access information. In May 2009, FOIA in cooperation with APHIS' Animal Care program began posting all



# News for Stakeholders

April 2011

inspection reports for animal breeders, dealers and brokers, exhibitors, and transporters. Previously, only frequently requested inspection reports were available online. In December 2009, research facilities were added to the list of inspection reports available online. Together, these changes should help to decrease repeat requests, saving resources and allowing the FOIA office to concentrate on other incoming requests.



# News for Stakeholders

April 2011



## National Animal Health Emergency Response Corps Membership Exceeds 1400 Nationwide

The recent massive foot-and-mouth disease outbreak in South Korea highlights the need for a cadre of trained emergency responders who are at the ready in the event of a serious foreign animal disease outbreak. APHIS' National Animal Health Emergency Response Corps (NAHERC) now has more than 1,400 volunteers, including 618 veterinarians, who can help the Agency meet critical staffing needs in the event of a serious outbreak or natural disaster.

“When you deal with emergency management, you always think worst-case scenario,” said NAHERC’s Coordinator Tom Cunningham. “We want to make sure we’re prepared for any outbreak or disaster scenario that threatens U.S. animal health.”

APHIS established NAHERC in 2001 to respond to foreign animal disease outbreaks and other disasters that affect livestock, poultry, companion animals and wildlife. In addition to its 618 volunteer veterinarians, NAHERC also has 853 animal health technicians (AHT) on standby. These volunteers are spread throughout the nation (see map) and can be quickly mobilized to assist APHIS' Veterinary Services program with activities such as disease sampling and surveillance, program support, animal care, mass evacuation and any other possible scenario where additional support may be needed.

NAHERC volunteers become temporary federal employees who are paid for their service. Tours of duty generally last 21 to 30 days. VS is always looking to expand NAHERC's ranks, and veterinarians with large animal experience are especially encouraged to apply. Cunningham's goal is to have 1,000 veterinarians



# News for Stakeholders

April 2011

registered with NAHERC by the end of the calendar year while maintaining the number of AHTs already registered with the program. In addition to veterinarians and AHTs, college students are also eligible to volunteer for the program. NAHERC's cadre currently includes a number of veterinary school students who upon graduation will transfer from AHTs to veterinarians on the volunteer roster.

To learn more about NAHERC and how to apply, please visit [http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal\\_health/emergency\\_management/naherc.shtml](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/emergency_management/naherc.shtml) or contact NAHERC's Coordinator Tom Cunningham at 301-734-4933 or by email at [thomas.m.cunningham@aphis.usda.gov](mailto:thomas.m.cunningham@aphis.usda.gov) for more information.





# News for Stakeholders

April 2011

## USDA Seeks Nominations for Biotechnology and 21st Century Agriculture Advisory Committee

USDA is seeking nominations through April 17, for members to serve on Secretary Vilsack's Advisory Committee on Biotechnology and 21st Century Agriculture (AC21). Committee members will help to provide USDA with practical measures and tools that can be developed to help facilitate the coexistence of biotechnology-derived agricultural crop production with crops produced using other methods.

The AC21 committee was first established by USDA in 2003 and was recently renewed by Secretary Vilsack. Under its charter, the AC21 Committee helps USDA maintain an intensive and broad-based dialogue to explore and understand the wide array of issues related to agricultural biotechnology. USDA is seeking 20 to 25 members, plus up to seven ex officio members from Federal and/or State government agencies outside of USDA. Members will initially serve one or two-year terms. Members will be selected in order to achieve a broad representation of stakeholders and foster a dialogue on USDA biotechnology policies that considers all viewpoints. Members may be reappointed by the Secretary and can serve up to six consecutive years.

Nominations for membership must be submitted in writing and provide the appropriate background documents as described in the [Federal Register](#) notice. All nomination materials should be sent to Michael Schechtman, Designated Federal Official, Office of the Secretary, USDA 202B Jamie L. Whitten Federal Building, 14th and Independence Ave., SW, Washington, D.C. 20250. Forms may also be submitted by fax at 202-690-4265, if they are followed by written copies. Nominations must be received by fax or postmarked on or before April 17, 2011.



# News for Stakeholders

April 2011

## APHIS Biotechnology Regulatory Services Earns ISO 9001:2008 Recertification

APHIS Biotechnology Regulatory Services (BRS) recently successfully completed its International Organization for Standardization (ISO) 9001:2008 recertification surveillance audit, conducted by the National Standards Body. As part of this process, BRS's Permits and Program Services Branch and Environmental Risk Analysis Programs were audited in their entirety and certified on January 26, 2011. BRS earned the re-certification without a single incident of non-conformity (a failure to conform with requirements).

Maintaining ISO certification enables BRS to demonstrate its continued commitment to better meet the needs of its stakeholders; ensure compliance with regulations; operate a process that is transparent to all stakeholders; and assure complete applications for scientists. "An internationally recognized quality management system represents the commitment of our entire staff to providing the highest levels of service and quality to the full range of stakeholders, and provides a great platform for continual improvement," said Steve Bennett, Chief of BRS' Permits and Program Services Branch.

Traditionally, ISO certification has been sought primarily by the manufacturing industry; however, social service organizations (including government, quasi-government, and private sector agencies) have also come to recognize it as value added and a well suited framework for their service applications.

The ISO standards met in the BRS audit emphasize improved consistency, standardization of processes to reduce errors, providing staff with resources to guide their daily work activities, greater cost efficiencies, and improved management of risks, losses and resources.

For more information on BRS, please click [here](#).



# News for Stakeholders

April 2011

## Going Global: APHIS' Role in Facilitating Agricultural Trade

As part of its mission to safeguard American agriculture and natural resources, APHIS plays a leading role in facilitating the international movement of agricultural products through the development and implementation of the guiding principles of the World Trade Organization (WTO) -Sanitary & Phytosanitary (SPS) Agreement.

Since it came into force in 1998, the SPS agreement emphasizes the utilization of science based regulations and international or regional standards to protect human, animal and plant health and safety. APHIS' Office of the Administrator has concentrated on strengthening and expanding the Agency's participation in international SPS trade negotiations in order to advance and facilitate the safe international movement of agricultural commodities, including those derived from modern biotechnology. APHIS continues to be a world leader in the support for international based standards through active participation in the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) in Rome, Italy and the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) in Paris, France.

To complement APHIS' strategic goals in a complex and globalized SPS arena, APHIS' International Services (IS) program has overseas offices in 40 countries that work in close collaboration with the IS Trade Support Team to support Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ), Veterinary Services (VS) and Biotechnology and Regulatory Services (BRS) international activities. In addition, IS Foreign Service Officers (FSOs) play a key and integral part in bilateral or trilateral trade negotiations where they work with these APHIS units to successfully carry out the APHIS mission.

A key role for these IS regional field offices is to establish relationships and foster trust with trading partners. Although IS' dialogue and scientific exchange is highly technical in nature, it is critical to utilize diplomatic and interpersonal - intercultural skills to advance APHIS positions and strategies. IS FSOs also proactively





# News for Stakeholders

April 2011

respond to, and communicate with, local and U.S. industry representatives where they discuss the status of import-export issues and/or the Agency's preclearance programs, among other trade related items.

Among the trade related roles IS is responsible for, one of the most important is the responsibility to "trouble-shoot" U.S. agricultural shipments that get detained at the border for various reasons- such as lack of a phytosanitary or animal health certificate, incorrect certification, basic misunderstandings by agricultural port-of-entry agricultural or customs officers, or pest detections. To address these stoppages and maintain the flow of trade, IS collaborates closely with APHIS headquarters, APHIS field offices, industry and our counterparts to determine if the issue can be resolved without the shipment being rejected. During the last year, APHIS has been successful in releasing 294 number of shipments valued at 48 million dollars.

For more information on International Services, please visit our website at:

[http://www.aphis.usda.gov/international\\_safeguarding/index.shtml](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/international_safeguarding/index.shtml)



# News for Stakeholders

April 2011



## APHIS YouTube Feature of the Month: Don't Risk Citrus, Don't Move Citrus

APHIS' Save our Citrus campaign has added a public service announcement to alert the public to the risk of spreading citrus diseases by moving citrus plants. The video "Don't Risk Citrus, Don't Move Citrus" can be viewed at the following link:

<http://www.youtube.com/usdaaphis#p/a/f/0/y5OiAv5ilKY>



# News for Stakeholders

April 2011

## APHIS Employee Feature: Patricia Douglass, Plant Protection and Quarantine

**Name:** Patricia M. Douglass (Patty)

**Title:** State Plant Health Director - Connecticut, Massachusetts and Rhode Island

**Tell us about your role:** I manage APHIS Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) programs in southern New England with the exception of the Asian Longhorned Beetle (ALB) eradication program in Worcester and Boston, MA. This involves working closely with cooperators in State and Federal agencies, Native American tribes and Industry, as well as the many talented, dedicated staff at ports of entry and inland on pest detection, eradication or management of injurious agricultural and forest pests, interstate quarantine management of pests, and export certification of US grown products. I enjoy involvement in projects and/or assignments that benefit both my region and our agency. Currently, I'm serving as a member of the PPQ Leadership Team which provides a great opportunity to engage in exactly these types of activities. Most rewarding to me at this point in my career is mentoring coworkers and helping them to achieve their professional goals.

**How long have you worked at APHIS:** 32 excellent years!

**Education:** Bachelor of Science in Ornamental Horticulture from the University of Maryland, 1977.

**Most Memorable APHIS experience:** August 1, 2008, a Saturday, when I met my State cooperator at the residence of a Worcester, MA citizen who had submitted cell phone photos the previous evening of insects



Patricia M. Douglass (Patty)  
State Plant Health Director



# News for Stakeholders

April 2011

she'd found in her yard that she suspected were ALB. It took only moments to concur that yes, we had a huge problem in this community. I was at ground zero for about two months while a team was put in place to manage day to day operations. This project ultimately grew into the largest ALB eradication in the country and unfortunately has required the removal of approximately 19,000 trees to date. A second memorable experience was being the Authorized Departmental Official's Designated Representative (ADODR) on a cooperative agreement with The Nature Conservancy to produce a documentary on ALB and community survival entitled "Lurking in the Trees". You can view this on the [APHIS YouTube Channel](#) in its entirety

**Priorities for the coming months:** Conducting State Plant Health Director - State Plant Regulatory Official dialogues in my three states; updating state emergency management plans; coordinating the eleven state Forest Pest Outreach and Survey Project second year annual review; and continuing to serve as an active member of the PPQ Leadership Team.

**Last good book read:** The Vortex: Where the Law of Attraction Assembles All Cooperative Relationships by Ester and Jerry Hicks. Not traditional fare in books, but one that helps you understand every relationship you have or ever have had. If you believe your thoughts create your reality then this book will help you understand how you can change your relationships of all types by changing your thoughts.

**Favorite movie:** Men in Black with Will Smith. There aren't many movies that I'd willingly watch more than once but I just love the action and adventure and for my money you can't beat talented Will Smith or Tommy Lee Jones.

**Hobbies:** Combing beaches for beach glass, being a Reiki practitioner, and Hospice volunteering.



# News for Stakeholders

April 2011



## Vacancies in APHIS

All Agency vacancies are posted on the APHIS Web site. To view the entire list of APHIS vacancies go to [www.aphis.usda.gov](http://www.aphis.usda.gov). Under Related Topics click on Find a Job in APHIS. The positions highlighted below are for relevant positions that are at the GS-13 level and above.

Position: [Supervisory Veterinary Medical Officer](#)

Location: Ames, Iowa

Pay Plan: GS-0701-14/14

Who May Apply: All U.S. Citizens

Position Closes: April 25, 2011